

specimens available have their wings 138 (frayed)—150. The upper limit would be larger in fresh birds. The tarsus is noticeably stouter than in *gallinago*.

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
HORNBILL HOUSE,
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October 25, 1969.

8. NOTES ON INDIAN BIRDS-11. ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF *STERNA FUSCATA* LINNAEUS IN INDIAN LIMITS—A CORRECTION

At a monthly meeting of the Bombay Natural History Society held on 4 July 1887 (*JBNHS* 2:286), reference was made to a Sooty Tern *Sterna fuliginosa*, now *S. fuscata*, said to have been obtained by W. F. Sinclair at Alibag, Kolaba District; this is noted as the only record from the area in "The Birds of Bombay and Salsette" (1939, *JBNHS* 40:636).

In 1938, Sálím Ali, Charles McCann and I collected numerous remains of terns and their eggs on the Vengurla Rocks, off Malwan, south of Bombay, and among them the smaller wings could be divided into two groups, brown and grey. Sálím Ali who compared our specimens with specimens in the Society's collection (1939, *JBNHS* 43:448) divided the brown wings into two groups: (a) measuring 237 (2), 240, and 242 mm., which he identified as *Sterna anaethetus*, recorded there by Hume in 1875, and (b) 2 measuring 270 and 294, which he identified as *Sterna fuscata*, making the only nesting record for the area, the next nearest being from the Laccadives. It may be mentioned that the wings found by us have not been preserved.

On 21 October 1947, I obtained 2 terns out of a loose party of 5 or 6 on wooden boxes and similar rubbish floating in a calm patch in the sea, about a mile south of Bombay and 5 miles off the mainland. These were identified as *Sterna fuscata* by Sálím Ali.

When working out my first collection from the Andamans (1968), I was unable to separate the material in Bombay into two species *fuscata* and *anaethetus*, and one of the two just mentioned was sent to the Smithsonian Institution where they identified it as *anaethetus*. Presumably for this reason this record is omitted from the INDIAN HANDBOOK, but a reference is made to Sinclair's specimen.

While cataloguing the collection (1969), the bird from Alibag seemed to me to be no different from the several others accepted as *anaethetus*,

and I requested the British Museum (Natural History) to send me representative specimens of both species. With this additional material in hand, Sálím Ali and I are agreed that we have no specimen of *fuscata* in the Society's collection, and that the bird collected by Sinclair is *anaethetus* and not *fuliginosa* (*fuscata*) as originally recorded.

Judging from the material available, *fuscata* is larger (wing over 270) than *anaethetus* and is separable from it by its much darker upper parts and the white eye-stripe not continuing beyond the eye as it does in *anaethetus*. The two wings from Vengurla Rocks, if correctly measured, indicate that *fuscata* breeds there but, in view of the possibility of error in ascertaining the correct measurements from broken wings separated from the body, it is advisable to await a confirmation.

The 16 specimens of *anaethetus* available in Bombay from the Red Sea to the Andamans and the Ceylon specimens obtained from the British Museum cannot be separated into the three races now accepted in the FAUNA and INDIAN HANDBOOK.

75, ABDUL REHMAN STREET,
BOMBAY-3,

HUMAYUN ABDULALI

January, 30, 1970.

9. THE FLIGHT SPEED OF THE HOUSE CROW, *CORVUS SPLENDENS* VIEILLOT

On 19 August 1969, I was going from Vellore to Arkonam (North Arcot Dt., Tamil Nadu) in our departmental jeep for field work, when near the village of Vallam, I noticed a pair of house crows flying in the same direction as the jeep. As the trunk road was almost straight and they were flying overhead parallel to the road, we kept pace with them for nearly five kilometres. The speedometer of the jeep showed a constant speed of 35 kilometres per hour. They were flying leisurely quite often calling to each other and it appeared that this was their normal flight speed as against the hurried flight when they are late to return to the roosting place from feeding areas.

Care

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December 26, 1969.